

introduce a resolution that is long overdue. On behalf of the entire Louisiana delegation, I would like to honor the forgotten heroes of World War II—the late Andrew Jackson Higgins, who designed the Higgins landing craft and his 20,000 employees who built the 20,000 boats that won the war.

Once again, I ask Congress to recognize these heroes—who contributed so greatly to the war effort, but never left the Louisiana shores.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here to reintroduce a resolution to award the late Andrew Jackson Higgins and the 20,000 plus men and women of Higgins Industries that supported the war efforts abroad with a Congressional Gold Medal. This medal will serve as long-overdue recognition for their patriotic contributions to our country, to the world—to peace and to freedom.

Briefly, let me explain again why then late Andrew Higgins and the employees of Higgins Industries deserve this most prestigious honor.

Andrew Jackson Higgins designed the landing craft, now dubbed “the Higgins boats,” used to land troops across open beaches during all amphibious assaults in World War II. The most famous, of course, was the D-Day invasion of Normandy; but other landings, like Leyte Gulf, Guadalcanal and Sicily were equally important.

The 20,000 Higgins boats were built at eight plants in New Orleans, the city that I represent and that is home to the National D-Day Museum. These plants produced most of the vessels and equipment that were essential to the war efforts. Higgins employed more than 20,000 workers around the clock for over four years. They built over 20,000 landing craft and trained over 30,000 military personnel on the operation of the boats. At their peak, Higgins Industries produced about 700 boats per month.

Beyond his dedication during the war, Higgins possessed qualities that were far beyond his years.

Even before America entered the war, Higgins anticipated the possible need for his boats, and he purchased the entire 1940 Philippine Mahogany crop.

Higgins displayed a social conscience that was unimaginably progressive in the 1940s. He employed men and women, blacks and whites with an “equal pay for equal work” policy decades before integration and gender equality in the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, Andrew Jackson Higgins was a man of great insight and ingenuity. His accomplishments were recognized by President Eisenhower on more than one occasion. On Thanksgiving, 1944, Eisenhower boasted, “Let us thank God for Higgins Industries’ management and labor which has given us the landing boats with which to conduct our campaign.”

Again, in 1964, Eisenhower praised Andrew Higgins by saying, “He is the man that won the war. If Higgins had not produced and developed those landing craft, we never could have gone in over an open beach. We would have had to change the entire strategy of the war.”

The time has come for the Nation to honor the contributions of the people of Higgins Industries: men and women, blacks and whites, working side by side, equal pay for equal work, to build the boats that won World War

II. Mr. Higgins went above and beyond the call of duty for his country and worked in a way that was far beyond his years. His progressive and aggressive policies before and during the war should serve as a member to all of us who serve our country, and should thus be duly recognized.

Mr. Speaker, I reiterate, the recognition of the late Andrew Jackson Higgins and the employees of Higgins’ Industries is long overdue. I believe these forgotten heroes should now be honored and always remembered. A Congressional Gold Medal will honor them, just as their work helped to keep us free.

## AIDS EPIDEMIC

SPEECH OF

**HON. CARRIE P. MEEK**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 5, 2001*

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today marks twenty years since the official recognition of the disease that would come to be known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS. In those twenty years medical and pharmaceutical advancements have made HIV/AIDS more manageable for some, but a cure has yet to be found.

In order to erase this scourge from the planet, a re-commitment, not complacency is required by the United States and all governments around the world. We need to refocus our efforts and not allow complacency to dictate the future. There must be a continued worldwide commitment to the eradication of this plague. 20 years of AIDS is Enough!

### THE IMPACT OF AIDS

Twenty years ago, the devastating impact AIDS was to have on the world could not have been imagined. On June 5, 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published an article about five cases of rare pneumocystis pneumonia among gay men in Los Angeles. Since then, AIDS has spread globally, with 36 million people presently living with HIV, 900,000 in the United States alone.

According to the CDC, people of color make up 57% of the cumulative AIDS cases and 68% of the new AIDS cases reported as of June 2000. It is the leading cause of death of African-American men ages 25–44. 40,000 new HIV infections occur in the U.S. every year.

According to the CDC, men of color account for 63% of the new AIDS cases reported among men in the twelve months ended June 2000 and women of color make up 82% of new AIDS cases reported among females in the twelve months ended June 2000. Children of color make up 84% of the pediatric new AIDS cases reported in the twelve months ended in June 2000. Young men of color and women of color are particularly vulnerable.

The 1998–2000 Young Men’s Survey (YMS), a study of over 2,000 gay men ages 23 to 29 in Baltimore, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and Seattle, found that 30% of African-Americans, 15% of Hispanics, 3% of Asians and 7 percent of Caucasian men were living with HIV. Only a third of those infected knew they had HIV. In 1999, persons aged

13–24 years accounted for 15% of reported HIV cases, and women made up 49% of the cases in this age group.

Since 1981 the face of AIDS has changed markedly. Originally known as a “gay man’s disease”, AIDS has exploded into a worldwide epidemic affecting men, women and children of all races, a deadly presence that does not discriminate. In the US, while 46% of reported AIDS cases were the result of homosexual contact, 54% were exposed through heterosexual contact or intravenous drug use (IDU); worldwide, more than 80 percent of all adult HIV infections have resulted from heterosexual intercourse. The largest number of persons infected with HIV/AIDS are Sub-Saharan Africans, totaling at present 25.3 million, though Asia is presently set to out-pace Africa in the next decade.

In twenty years, HIV has infected a reported 52 million people worldwide. 21.8 million have died from AIDS, 3 million in the year 2000. Of the 36 million people presently living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, 34.7 million are adults, 18.3 million are men, 16.4 million are women and 1.3 million are under the age of 15. It is estimated that during 2000, 5.2 million people were newly infected with HIV, an average of 14,250 daily.

In the 20 years since AIDS was identified, more than 800,000 Americans have been diagnosed with AIDS; nearly half of them have died. Today, AIDS still claims two lives every hours in this country. Worldwide, more than 35 million people are currently living with AIDS . . . 22 million have already died. Three million lives were lost in 2000 alone. Most of them died without adequate medical care or treatment for even the most common and treatable infections that accompany the disease.

We must never forget the contributions of those who have gone before us. Today as we recognize the 20th Anniversary of the discovery of AIDS. I commend the 12 National Organizations from across the country, who have come together to launch a national campaign to provide health care, treatment, and prevention education and information to millions of Americans impacted by this epidemic with the following goals:

To raise the level of awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States and its devastating impact on our nation in the last 20 years. To illustrate for America’s leadership the catastrophic worldwide epidemic and its likely toll in human lives. To motivate Americans, particularly policymakers, to recommit to advances in treatment, medicine and science. To engage Americans of all ages in local activities that allow them to understand that this epidemic touches everyone.

AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, AIDS Project Los Angeles, The Balm in Gilead, Broadway Cares, Gay Men’s Health Crisis, The National Association of People with AIDS, National Minority AIDS Council, The NAMES Project Foundation, San Francisco AIDS Foundation, and the Whitman-Walker Clinic are all to be commended for coming together in this unique partnership to launch a national public affairs campaign to provide health care, treatment, and prevention education and information to millions of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, 20 years of AIDS is Enough!